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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CAREER DEVELOPMENT,
COMPENSATION, AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE ON
EMPLOYEES' RETENTION IN AUDIT FIRMS**

BY

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UUM
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ABSTRACT

Retaining skilled employees is an ongoing challenge due to high turnover, demanding workload, and limited talent supply. This study examines the relationship between career development, compensation, and work-life balance on employees' retention, using Social Exchange Theory (SET) as the main framework. The research focused on Big-Four, mid-tier, and small firms in the Klang Valley, in which early staff departures often affect audit quality and increase recruitment costs. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was used, with purposive sampling applied to collect 336 valid responses through a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 29, applying descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression. The results showed all three factors significantly and positively influence employee retention, with work-life balance is the strongest indicator, followed by career development, and compensation. The model explained 59.7% of the variance in retention, showing the importance of strategic HR practices in sustaining workforce stability. This study recommends supportive work-life balance, structured career development opportunities, and competitive compensation packages as key retention strategies. The findings provide empirical support for SET in the Malaysian audit context and offer practical recommendations for developing effective retention strategies and committed employees.

Keywords: Employees Retention, Career Development, Compensation, Work-life Balance, Social Exchange Theory

ABSTRAK

Mengekalkan pekerja berkemahiran merupakan cabaran berterusan disebabkan kadar keluar masuk pekerja yang tinggi, beban kerja yang banyak, dan kekurangan tenaga kerja yang berbakat. Kajian ini meneliti hubungan antara pembangunan kerjaya, pampasan, dan keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan terhadap pengekalan pekerja dengan menggunakan Teori Pertukaran Sosial sebagai rangka kerja utama. Penyelidikan ini memfokuskan kepada firma audit Big-Four, peringkat sederhana, dan kecil di Lembah Klang, di mana pengunduran awal kakitangan sering memberi kesan terhadap kualiti audit dan meningkatkan kos pengambilan pekerja. Reka bentuk kajian kuantitatif secara keratan rentas digunakan, dengan pensampelan bertujuan untuk mengumpulkan 336 maklum balas yang sah melalui soal selidik berstruktur. Data dianalisis menggunakan SPSS versi 29 dengan menerapkan statistik deskriptif, korelasi Pearson, dan regresi linear berganda. Keputusan menunjukkan ketiga-tiga faktor mempunyai pengaruh positif yang signifikan terhadap pengekalan pekerja, dengan keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan sebagai pengaruh paling kuat, diikuti oleh pembangunan kerjaya dan pampasan. Model ini juga menerangkan 59.7% varians dalam pengekalan pekerja, secara tidak langsung menunjukkan kepentingan amalan sumber manusia yang strategik dalam mengekalkan kestabilan tenaga kerja. Kajian ini menyokong keseimbangan kerja-kehidupan, peluang pembangunan kerjaya yang berstruktur, dan pakej pampasan yang kompetitif sebagai strategi utama pengekalan pekerja. Hasil kajian ini memberikan sokongan empirikal terhadap SET dalam konteks audit di Malaysia, serta menawarkan cadangan praktikal untuk membangunkan strategi pengekalan yang berkesan dan pekerja yang komited.

Kata kunci: Pengekalan Pekerja, Pembangunan Kerjaya, Pampasan, Keseimbangan Kerja-Kehidupan, Teori Pertukaran Sosial

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I hope, this humble piece of work from me may contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of human resource management, specifically in audit profession. Thank you for now.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOB	Audit Oversight Board
CA	Chartered Accountant
COB	College of Business
CPE	Continuing Professional Education
ERS	Employee Retention Strategies
HR	Human Resource
IAASB	International Auditing and Assurance International Board
ISA	International Standard of Accounting
ISQC	International Standard of Quality Control
MIA	Malaysia Institute of Accountants
PIE	Public Interest Entities
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
SC	Securities Commission
SET	Social Exchange Theory
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
UUM	Universiti Utara Malaysia
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WLB	Work-Life Balance

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the background of the study conducted. Then, problem statement is discussed in within this study, highlighted the research questions involved, formulation of research objectives, scope, and significant of the study and the definition of key terms used in this paper. On the last part of this chapter, a brief description on the arrangement for the rest of the chapters present in this project paper and the summary of chapter one.

1.2 Background of Study

In today's competitive business environment, investment in human capital has become essential for organizational growth and sustainability (Kianoosh Ganji, 2021). The dynamic nature of global market conditions is compelling organizations to adopt alternative strategies not only to remain competitive but also to enhance employee retention in an increasingly volatile work environment. According to Rachman & Hamzah (2023), employee retention shows the ability and effort of the organization to retain the employees loyalty, and Khan et al. (2024) further expand this context to the skilful and talented employees. Attracting and retaining high-performing talent is important for organizations to stay ahead of other competitors, particularly within the demanding landscape of audit firms. Characterized by intense workloads (Christensen et al., 2021), high performance expectations (Ali & Ghani, 2022), and significant turnover rates (Wei et al., 2019), audit firms depend on professionals, in this context is auditor, who own not only technical proficiency but also deep industry knowledge to

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY FORM



APPENDIX A: Survey Form

SECTION 1

This part contains a few demographic information pertaining to yourself. Please tick (✓) the appropriate responses for all questions or write your response in the space provided.

1) Gender :

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

2) Age :

- ☐ 20-25 years old
- ☐ 26-30 years old
- ☐ 31-35 years old
- ☐ 36-40 years old
- ☐ Above 40 years old

3) Marital Status :

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

4) Highest Educational Level :

- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Professional Certificate

5) Position :

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Associate | ☐ Manager |
| ☐ Associate 2 | ☐ Senior Manager |
| ☐ Senior Associate | ☐ Director |
| ☐ Senior Associate 2 | ☐ Partner |
| ☐ Assistant Manager | |

- 6) Type of Firm :
- () Big-Four
 - () Mid-Tier
 - () Small Firm

- 7) Years of Working Experience :
- () Less than 1 Year
 - () 1-3 Years
 - () 4-6 Years
 - () 7-10 Years
 - () More than 10 Years

- 8) Tenure with Current Firm :
- () Less than 1 Year
 - () 1-3 Years
 - () 4-6 Years
 - () 7-10 Years
 - () More than 10 Years

- 9) Monthly Salary Range :
- () Below RM3,000
 - () RM3,001 – RM5,000
 - () RM5,001 – RM8,000
 - () RM8,001 – RM10,000
 - () RM10,001 – RM15,000
 - () RM15,001 and above

SECTION 2

INSTRUCTION: With reference to the current firms that you are working, please indicate the level of agreement to the following statement by circling the appropriate number in the scale given.

No. Bil.		<i>Strongly disagree Sangat Tidak Setuju</i>	<i>Disagree Tidak Setuju</i>	<i>Moderate Sederhana</i>	<i>Agree Setuju</i>	<i>Strongly Agree Sangat Setuju</i>
1.	My firm trains employees on skills that prepare them for future jobs and career development.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My firm provides career counselling and planning assistance to employees.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My firm allows employees to have the time to learn new skills that prepare them for future jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My firm provides support when employees decide to obtain ongoing training.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My firm is receptive to employees' requests for lateral transfers (transfer to another department).	1	2	3	4	5
6.	My firm ensures that employees can expect confidentiality when consulting staff.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My firm provides employees with information on the availability of job openings inside the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	My firm is fully supportive of a career-management program for the employees.	1	2	3	4	5

9.	My firm provides a systematic program that regularly assesses employees' skills and interest.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	My salary is satisfactory in relation to what I do.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I derive satisfaction when my annual bonus associated with individual performance.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	It gives me satisfaction when my annual bonus is based on organizational performance.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I am satisfied that my medical insurance benefits cover employee, spouse, children, and parents.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	It gives me satisfaction to know that I can avail unpaid time offs such as study leave.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	My organization provides opportunities to avail accident insurance benefits.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	My organization empathizes and sympathizes by providing paid time offs such as paternity leave and bereavement leave for the death of a family or household member.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	My organization cares by providing special leave for extended maternity or attending dependent family members.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	There are opportunities to avail vacations or holiday programs.	1	2	3	4	5

19.	My personal life suffers because of work.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I miss personal activities because of work.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I neglect personal needs because of work.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I put personal life on hold for work.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I struggle to juggle work and non-work.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	My job makes personal life difficult.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I am happy with the amount of time for non-work activities.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	My job gives me energy to pursue personal activities.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I am in a better mood because of my job.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I am planning on working for another company within a period of three years.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Within this company my work gives me satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at the possibilities within this company.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	I see a future for myself within this company.	1	2	3	4	5

32.	It does not matter if I am working for this company or another, as long as I have work.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	If it were up to me, I will definitely be working for this company for the next five years.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	If I could start over again, I would choose to work for another company.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	If I received an attractive job offer from another company, I would take the job.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	The work I am doing is very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	I love working for this company.	1	2	3	4	5

**THANK YOU FOR SPARING YOUR VALUABLE TIME TO COMPLETE
THIS SURVEY**

APPENDIX B: SPSS OUTPUT DATA



APPENDIX B: SPSS Output Data

1) Reliability Test

Scale: Career Development

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	336	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	336	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
CD1	28.27	23.304	.660	.822	.860
CD2	28.74	24.442	.319	.519	.889
CD3	28.48	22.436	.758	.873	.851
CD4	28.39	22.329	.675	.553	.857
CD5	28.96	23.813	.388	.532	.883
CD6	28.46	22.100	.752	.608	.851
CD7	28.90	20.791	.646	.749	.861
CD8	28.70	21.702	.768	.739	.848
CD9	28.70	21.953	.730	.734	.852

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.875	9

Scale: Compensation

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	336	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	336	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
COMP1	27.07	35.899	.704	.836
COMP2	27.00	36.179	.439	.859
COMP3	26.99	36.991	.393	.863
COMP4	26.85	34.002	.560	.848
COMP5	26.57	35.518	.775	.832
COMP6	26.91	34.470	.633	.839
COMP7	26.27	35.555	.552	.847
COMP8	26.61	33.588	.628	.840
COMP9	26.73	33.546	.721	.830

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.859	9

Scale: Work-life Balance

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	336	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	336	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
WLB1	24.07	31.219	.592	.869
WLB2	24.32	28.780	.792	.851
WLB3	24.01	28.161	.859	.845
WLB4	24.17	29.286	.762	.854
WLB5	24.09	29.073	.795	.851
WLB6	23.96	28.936	.752	.855
WLB7	23.85	35.522	.148	.903
WLB8	24.30	32.093	.400	.887
WLB9	24.29	31.058	.576	.870

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.879	9

Scale: Employee Retention

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	336	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	336	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ER2	24.28	21.480	.696	.776
ER3	24.36	23.062	.359	.819
ER4	24.50	20.549	.640	.780
ER5	24.30	28.843	-.215	.859
ER6	24.88	19.740	.778	.760
ER7	24.84	21.150	.613	.784
ER8	25.85	21.851	.597	.787
ER9	23.98	24.268	.424	.808
ER10	24.11	20.793	.688	.774

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.816	9

2) Normality Test

Case Processing Summary

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
ER	336	100.0%	0	0.0%	336	100.0%
CD	336	100.0%	0	0.0%	336	100.0%
COMP	336	100.0%	0	0.0%	336	100.0%
WLB	336	100.0%	0	0.0%	336	100.0%

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
ER	.108	336	<.001	.963	336	<.001
CD	.166	336	<.001	.829	336	<.001
COMP	.091	336	<.001	.938	336	<.001
WLB	.139	336	<.001	.918	336	<.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Descriptives

			Statistic	Std. Error
ER	Mean		3.0708	.03192
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.0080	
		Upper Bound	3.1336	
	5% Trimmed Mean		3.0783	
	Median		3.0000	
	Variance		.342	
	Std. Deviation		.58511	
	Minimum		1.78	
	Maximum		4.11	
	Range		2.33	
	Interquartile Range		.67	
	Skewness		-.153	.133
	Kurtosis		-.461	.265
CD	Mean		3.5780	.03213
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.5148	
		Upper Bound	3.6412	
	5% Trimmed Mean		3.6123	
	Median		3.5556	
	Variance		.347	
	Std. Deviation		.58889	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		4.78	
	Range		3.78	
	Interquartile Range		.56	
	Skewness		-1.792	.133
	Kurtosis		7.065	.265
COMP	Mean		3.3472	.04004
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.2685	
		Upper Bound	3.4260	
	5% Trimmed Mean		3.3688	
	Median		3.4444	
	Variance		.539	
	Std. Deviation		.73394	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		4.56	
	Range		3.56	
	Interquartile Range		1.22	
	Skewness		-.504	.133
	Kurtosis		.633	.265
WLB	Mean		3.0146	.03735
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.9411	
		Upper Bound	3.0880	
	5% Trimmed Mean		3.0090	
	Median		2.8889	
	Variance		.469	
	Std. Deviation		.68473	
	Minimum		2.00	
	Maximum		4.11	
	Range		2.11	
	Interquartile Range		1.31	
	Skewness		.145	.133
	Kurtosis		-1.369	.265

3) Regression

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	WLB, CD, COMP ^b		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: ER

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.773 ^a	.597	.593	.37319

a. Predictors: (Constant), WLB, CD, COMP

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	68.449	3	22.816	163.826	<.001 ^b
	Residual	46.238	332	.139		
	Total	114.688	335			

a. Dependent Variable: ER

b. Predictors: (Constant), WLB, CD, COMP

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.057	.146		.389	.697					
	CD	.335	.047	.337	7.171	<.001	.557	.366	.250	.550	1.819
	COMP	.190	.039	.239	4.869	<.001	.607	.258	.170	.505	1.982
	WLB	.391	.032	.457	12.391	<.001	.577	.562	.432	.891	1.122

a. Dependent Variable: ER

Collinearity Diagnostics^a

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	(Constant)	Variance Proportions		
					CD	COMP	WLB
1	1	3.930	1.000	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	.039	10.008	.00	.06	.09	.74
	3	.022	13.432	.45	.02	.44	.11
	4	.009	21.279	.55	.92	.46	.15

a. Dependent Variable: ER

4) Correlations

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
ER	3.0708	.58511	336
CD	3.5780	.58889	336
COMP	3.3472	.73394	336
WLB	3.0146	.68473	336

Correlations

		CD	COMP	WLB	ER
CD	Pearson Correlation	1	.666**	.133*	.557**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	.015	<.001
	N	336	336	336	336
COMP	Pearson Correlation	.666**	1	.314**	.607**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	336	336	336	336
WLB	Pearson Correlation	.133*	.314**	1	.577**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	<.001		<.001
	N	336	336	336	336
ER	Pearson Correlation	.557**	.607**	.577**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	336	336	336	336

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5) Frequencies

Statistics										
		Gender	Age	Marital Status	Highest Educational Level	Position	Type of Firm	Years of Working Experience	Tenure with Current Firm	Monthly Salary Range
N	Valid	336	336	336	336	336	336	336	336	336
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Frequency Table

Gender				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	146	43.5	43.5
	1	190	56.5	100.0
	Total	336	100.0	

Age				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	210	62.5	62.5
	2	42	12.5	75.0
	3	14	4.2	79.2
	4	28	8.3	87.5
	5	42	12.5	100.0
	Total	336	100.0	

Highest Educational Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	84	25.0	25.0	25.0
	3	35	10.4	10.4	35.4
	5	217	64.6	64.6	100.0
	Total	336	100.0	100.0	

Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	238	70.8	70.8	70.8
	2	84	25.0	25.0	95.8
	3	14	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	336	100.0	100.0	

Position

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	56	16.7	16.7	16.7
	2	56	16.7	16.7	33.3
	3	98	29.2	29.2	62.5
	4	56	16.7	16.7	79.2
	6	28	8.3	8.3	87.5
	7	30	8.9	8.9	96.4
	8	12	3.6	3.6	100.0
	Total	336	100.0	100.0	

Type of Firm

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	238	70.8	70.8	70.8
	2	35	10.4	10.4	81.3
	3	63	18.8	18.8	100.0
	Total	336	100.0	100.0	

Years of Working Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	14	4.2	4.2	4.2
	2	224	66.7	66.7	70.8
	3	14	4.2	4.2	75.0
	4	28	8.3	8.3	83.3
	5	56	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	336	100.0	100.0	

Tenure with Current Firm

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	154	45.8	45.8	45.8
	2	84	25.0	25.0	70.8
	3	56	16.7	16.7	87.5
	4	14	4.2	4.2	91.7
	5	28	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	336	100.0	100.0	

Monthly Salary Range

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	126	37.5	37.5	37.5
	3	140	41.7	41.7	79.2
	4	70	20.8	20.8	100.0
	Total	336	100.0	100.0	